



AUGUST 23, 2005

**MAINE TAKES MEASURES TO PROTECT ANIMAL HEALTH AND BOLSTER CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY.**

New premises and animal identification program designed to locate, identify and traceback animal movements to protect against disease outbreak.

Dear Editor:

With heightened consumer interest in food safety and security and a growing concern over the origin of food products, as well as the recent diagnosis of the country's first native case of "mad cow disease", the traceability of our nations' livestock and poultry is being closely scrutinized. Many nations, including Canada and countries of the European Union already have mandated systems of animal identification and tracking. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has recently announced the creation of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). Currently, Maine and Vermont are the only New England States to receive NAIS grants to establish statewide programs in support of the national program. The Maine program (ID ME) will cover both commercial and non-commercial livestock operations.

We encourage editors to cover this story. It has business relevance to our diverse agricultural community, and consumer interest due to food-origin concerns.

The program has the following goals:

- Protect the livelihood of commercial producers and non-commercial livestock owners by ensuring animal health, assuring consumer confidence, and maintaining marketplace access for Maine products. The cumulative value of this industry is over \$1 billion of significant importance to the Maine economy.
- Track animal movements from producer farms to livestock markets, ports of entry, and processing plants.
- Allow for 48-hour traceback of products to enable rapid response to disease outbreaks.

Ultimately, the sooner that animal health officials can identify infected and potentially infected animals, the sooner they can stop the spread of disease. This will allow producers to return to normal distribution and give consumers the confidence to continue to purchase beef, poultry and fish raised or processed in Maine.

**PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The program includes the following animals:

- Cattle and Bison, Swine, Sheep, Goats, Horses, Poultry, Deer, Elk and other cervids, Lamas and Alpacas, and Aquaculture



The program has three components:

- **Premises Registration** – Register all locations that manage or hold animals. This includes large commercial and non-commercial premises, which may only manage a few animals. There is no charge for premises registration.
- **Individual Animal Identification** – Identify and tag all animals (individually or in Group/Lot depending on animal management process) from all registered premises.
- **Animal Tracking** – Trace animal movement, including premises number, animal identification number and dates of departure/arrival. The goal is traceback of all livestock within 48-hours of disease detection.

Using the NAIS grant, the State of Maine has hired a coordinator for this program and is actively registering commercial and non-commercial livestock premises into the program. Currently the program is voluntary, with the expectation of a federally mandated program in the near future. To support premises registration, ID ME will be run Public Service Announcements on television and will solicit both commercial and non-commercial farmers.

Maine is leading the way in protecting commercial producers' livelihood, as well as ensuring consumer confidence in Maine grown livestock, poultry and fish.

### CONTACTS

We are currently scheduling interviews and farm tours for media interested in covering this innovative program. For questions or to schedule an interview, please contact Judy Perry at 287-4507 or [judy.h.perry@maine.gov](mailto:judy.h.perry@maine.gov). You may also contact John Rooks at Rooks Communications at 772-0066 or [jrooks@rookscommunications.com](mailto:jrooks@rookscommunications.com)

Available for questions will be:

- Robert Spear, Commissioner of Agriculture
- Ned Porter, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
- Donald Hoenig, V.M.D., State Veterinarian
- Shelley Doak, Director of Animal Health Industry
- Upon request, interviews with producers currently registered with ID ME will be arranged.

Thank you for your interest in this important story. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

John Rooks  
Rooks Communications (on behalf of the Maine Department of Agriculture)